RECOLLECTIONS
AND
TALES
OF THE
CRYSTAL PALACE

JOHN SPARROW

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RECOLLECTIONS

AND

TALES

OF

THE CRYSTAL PALACE.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF

"BELGRAVIA;" "TEMPTATION, OR A WIFE'S PERILS;" "SPENCER'S CROSS MANOR HOUSE," &c. &c. &c.

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PREFACE.

In an age so essentially utilitarian and anti-poetical as our own, some apology should perhaps be offered for venturing to obtrude upon the public a Poem, even as short and unpretending as the present. But the very splendor, the original and poetic beauty of its subject, must plead its excuse. A plan so mighty, giving birth to a structure so unparalleled, could not but prove a theme for endless praise and admiration, to be recorded and sung in every variety of form and language. The hope, therefore, may perhaps, without too great presumption, be indulged, that this little work, insignificant as it is in itself, may yet derive some value—a kind of reflected lustre—from its mighty subject, flourishing like those humble wild flowers which, not without a certain simple sweetness of their own, derive their modest growth from some storied arch, or columned Fane of solemn and immemorial beauty.

Part I.

The Scene opens in the Crystal Palace, during its early days—Its effect upon the Spectator—Its probable future effect upon the World—The good-fellowship displayed in this Meeting of the Nations, a type of what should exist among Mankind in general—Great Britain a refuge for the persecuted and oppressed of all Countries—Her Peace and Prosperity contrasted with the intestine commotions of other Lands—The Praise ascribed, as it is due, to the Great Father of All.

The year wears on, and Autumn appears—The Crystal Palace begins to assume a somewhat faded aspect, like the trees it encloses within its walls—The Attendants look worn and wearied, and turn their thoughts to the distribution of the Prizes—For myself, I bid the scene a reluctant farewell, resolved to cherish its recollection, and record its beauties and my adventures in unpretending verse.

RECOLLECTIONS AND TALES

OF THE

CRYSTAL PALACE.

PART I.

I, WHO late sang Belgravia's charms—and strove
To paint her beauties, and her merits prove,
Now sing the CRYSTAL PALACE!—theme sublime,
That shall astound the world throughout all time!
Aid me, ye Muses! aid! your seat is here!
Ye murmuring fountains, charm my listening ear!

Fair sculptured forms, whose classic beauty bears
The spirit back to Rome's enchanted years,
Lend to my strains the power of art divine,
And let your soul poetic breathe in mine!

Lo! as I roam o'er this unequalled spot,
Earth and its drearier scenes are all forgot;
The mighty minds that with resistless will,
Raised the fair temple, seem to haunt it still!
A solemn glory shines along these aisles,
And in the violet-tinted distance, smiles;
And Peace, with dove-like pinions, seems to brood
Above this swarming, countless multitude.

Ah, priceless boon! Ah, blessing unconfined!
All hail to thee! benignant power of *mind!*
Where'er I turn, are wonders wrought by thee!
And still, in these, the *great First Cause* I see,
Whose mercy gave that spark of Heavenly fire
To light man here, and still direct him higher.

I gaze around—and thousands meet my eye—
I look within—the smallest unit, I!
Yet, with that wondrous power—my living soul,
I soar above, and contemplate the whole;
Nor only through these various scenes I range,
But search the shadowy future, and its change,
Far times—when this assembled crowd shall rest,
"Dust unto dust," within earth's quiet breast,
And all the glory of our golden age,
Shall be a word—no more—in hist'ry's page!

Yet shall this crystal pile—this mighty plan,
An influence wield upon the mind of man,
Free as itself, as wondrous and as vast,
And lasting still—whilst time itself shall last.
No narrow views—no rights exclusive, bar
This brilliant scene—nor its enchantments mar!
The prince and serf, the peasant and the peer,
Alike may revel in the beauties here;
Alike must feel how feeble and how small,
Each man alone—how great, how glorious all!

And in this fairy world of labour, see
A type of what the actual world should be.

Here, in one Brotherhood, the nations greet
With but one heart—as 'neath one roof they meet.
How wide soe'er their home—uncouth their name,
Or wild their nature, *here* they feel the same.
The same bright visions glad their eager eyes,
The same strange marvels strike them with surprise;
Their bosoms beat with rapture, or with woe,
Whether from India's heat, or Russia's snow;
And each high work of art, or priceless gem,
Calls forth responsive, tear or smile from them.
They meet—as all in this cold world should meet,
(One Heaven above—one Earth beneath their feet),
In peace and simple faith—a quiet band
Of brothers—greeting in a foreign land.
From East to West—from North to South they come,
As to a father's feast, a common home;
Partake with joy of all that varied store,
And part at last—to meet again no more.

And on the world's wide plain it thus should be;
Free are God's gifts—man's works should be as free.
His love provides the gem—the precious ore,
But to the hand that works it, grants he more:
The sure reward of labour—freely given
To all alike who breathe the airs of heaven!
Then, in this brotherhood of countless bands,
Speaking strange tongues, and nursed in various lands,
One broad, benignant principle should prove
That all are children of one Common Love;
Their lives, their commerce, and their laws should teach
The good of all, must be the good of each,
And that to fetter Trade, and Labour bind,
Is to repress God's gifts, and chain mankind.

Away with chains!—Britannia's flag unfurled,
Speaks Peace and Freedom to th' assembled world!
Where'er her banner floats—or sounds her name,
Distant or near, her power is still the same—
The power of Justice, Liberty, and Right,
Calm in their force—majestic in their might!

A rule more glorious, and a prouder boast
Than to be a mistress of an armèd host;
And like the Macedonian king of yore,
Exult o'er ravaged lands, and pine for more!

Far other aims are hers in times like these!
Swiftly her vessels skim the distant seas,
But not to bear to foreign lands afar,
Words of defiance—or the note of war.
A peaceful message hers, to every land—
She prays their nations' presence on her strand,
And strives their pride to rouse—their spirit stir,
To join in eager, bloodless fight with her.
And well may she a welcome free extend,
And greet alike each nation as a friend!
For she has proved a refuge through all time,
To the forlorn and wronged of every clime,
And none who sought her shores, by power opprest,
Have failed to find there, Freedom, Peace, and Rest.

Ah, glorious thought! . . . but if the boast be true,
His be the praise, to whom alone 'tis due!
A Father's love hath blessed this favoured isle,
Preserved it still—and sunned it in His smile;
When other lands were torn with inward strife,
And human passion warred with human life,
These happy shores were still from tumult free,
And Peace reigned here—combined with Liberty.
Britannia mourned indeed o'er many a throne
Prostrate and spoiled—but doubly prized her own;
And each true son of hers, whate'er his creed,
His name, or station, in one cause agreed—
The cause of Queen and Country—Law and Right,
Prepared by these to stand—for these to fight,
And guard them still—in all their lustre, bright!

Then whilst our free and favoured lot we prize,
Still may we turn to Heaven adoring eyes!
And, as a nation—fostered by His care,
Fearless—to all, the mighty debt declare;

Trusting, that whilst we humbly serve our God,
His blessing still shall rest upon our sod,
Smoothing the paths for us that erst our fathers trod.

* * * *

But whilst I sing, the Present glides away!
Day follows night, and night succeeds to day!
Swift fly the hours—and, heedless of its doom,
The brave old year hastes onward to the tomb!
Whate'er of brilliant light its youth hath known,
Hath in its graver age, less vivid grown;
And e'en this crystal Fane, that erst I deemed
A fairer scene than ever poet dreamed,
Looks pale and faded—like its forest trees,
Guarded from cooling shower, or passing breeze,

That lavished here their opening bloom, and now,
Shrivelled and parched—hang down each withering bough!

Yes, it is passing! . . See! the glory fades
Along the vista of those light arcades!
The summer airs—the summer's fervid heat—
The passage to and fro of countless feet—
The breath of millions—and that nameless blight
Time sheds too soon on all things fair and bright—
These—these, have left their mark—have cast a shade
On works the fairest, art hath ever made;
Adding one more, to many a lesson stern
Man learns full oft—yet ever needs to learn—
That beauty lasts but one brief summer's day,
And like himself, must vanish and decay.

Now wearied wights with months of toil opprest,
Pine for the coming close, and wished-for rest,
Gaze on their hoarded gains with eager eyes,
And inly ponder on th' expected prize;
Whilst crowds on crowds—more dense than e'en of yore,
Rush to the Fane they soon shall see no more.
For me, I go! . . . With sad reluctant heart,
I bid the scene farewell! and so depart—
It bears to me the aspect of a friend;
I will not look upon its ling'ring end!
Rather, I'll seek to keep its memory bright,
Gladsome and gay, as in its days of light,
And each fair form it owned—each thrilling sound,
And work of art that graced its hallowed ground,
My Muse shall sing—until her joyous strain,
The fairy vision shall restore again;
And Fancy's self shall shadow forth these walls,
And roam at will through these enchanted halls,
Shedding o'er all a halo, like the tone
Of purple light, that in the distance shone

Down the long aisles—and leaving in my heart,
The charm that ever dwells with highest art—
A sense of beauty that can ne'er depart!

Part II.

Morning in the Crystal Palace—Its quiet and solitude—Early Expeditions there for the purpose of drawing—The Hall of Austrian Statues—Exquisite Music at intervals, from some unknown Performer—The few privileged to enter before the admission of the Public, begin to arrive--The Policemen—Their attention and intelligence—Sounds gradually increase—A general movement throughout the Building—Her Majesty passes—Her joyous welcome.

Preparations for the business of the day—The Public are admitted, and continue to circulate throughout the Crystal Palace, until the evening—The bells toll the hour of departure —The Scene closes.

PART II.

Morn in the Crystal Palace! . . . Ah, how bright
That scene arose, 'mid floods of roseate light!
Silent and still the solemn Fane was then—
Freed from the sounds of earth—the tramp of men,
Whilst dim and giant-like, on every side
The shadowy marvels rose, outstretching wide
Their veilèd arms, to guard from aught of ill,
Each treasured store of industry and skill.
They seemed a mighty and mysterious race
Of phantoms, hovering o'er that lonely place,
Keeping in tranquil hours their silent sway,
But doomed to vanish with th' advancing day.

Ah, solemn scene! . . . My soul can ne'er forget
Its magic charms—their mem'ry haunts me yet,
When through the draperied groups I noiseless stole
To one fair hall—the fairest of the whole—
Where stood the sculptured forms of Austria—bright
In the soft hues of morn's refulgent light.
No veil but that which art supreme had wrought,
Concealed of all those forms unequalled, aught—
Alike sublime in beauty's matchless power,
In the broad noon, as in the moonlit hour,
Save that with warmer tints the marble glowed,
Or darker shades and broader masses shewed,
As high in heaven the sun his fiery way
Pursued, or Cynthia shed her softer ray.
But ne'er did fairer light that hall adorn,
Than in the silence of the breathing morn,
When oft, as gazing on those forms around,
I sat—there fell upon mine ear a sound
Of music—such a strain as Orpheus' lyre,
(So poets sing) within the realms of fire,
Charmed the infernal Gods with sweetest sound,
Till Ixion's wheel forbore its wonted round,

And Hell's grim monarch gave the word to bear
Eurydice, to earth and upper air—
Or one more silvery still—from Syren's tongue,
That swept the whole Sicilian coast along,
And wooed Ulysses, on his homeward way,
With vain and treacherous notes, to pause and stay.
As sweet the strain I heard*—now dying soft,
Now sending clear its ringing tones aloft,
With such impassioned fervor, that my sense
Was half bewildered with the joy intense
It gave; and those bright forms that met my eye
Seemed but a portion of the melody—
The fair creations of some poem, sung
In my charmed ears, by music's heavenly tongue.

* I was in the habit of going to the Hall of Austrian statues to draw, as early as eight o'clock in the morning, and I had seldom taken my seat long, before this music began. It was some kind of wind instrument; but the exquisite beauty of the airs, and the taste of the performer, whoever he was, cannot be described; nor do I ever remember any enjoyment greater than that which I experienced on those occasions, when all that could charm the eye and ear was around me; so that even the most prosaic person might well be inspired with the spirit of poetry.

From whence those sounds? I strove to learn in vain;
Their source was hid, and so must still remain;
But he, whose genius breathed them, little knew
What fairy pictures one who listened, drew
Within that hall of Austria—nor how dear
In after days, that music should appear,
Among the memories sweet, of that enchanted year.

Not long it lasted . . . when the first faint sound
Of footsteps stirring, 'gan to float around,
'T was hushed—like spirits' minstrelsy, whose play
Must vanish with the busier sounds of day.

Then, by degrees, there broke upon my ear
Voices, and steps of mortals hastening near—
The favoured few, who gloried in the power
Of entrance there, at that still morning hour.
And then too came the Austrian serfs, who strove
Each speck from those fair statues to remove,

Speaking the while in tongue of strangest sound,
And watering all the dry and timbered ground,
With streams that licked the dust they chanced to meet,
And flowed in torrents round unwary feet.
Then with slow step, and staid observant mien,
The shrewd policeman moved upon the scene,
Courteous and calm—but with an eye of care
That saw and noted every object there;
Exchanging many a nod and friendly glance
With the attendant hireling serfs, whom chance
Threw in his path, and with the quiet sense,
The earnest air, and keen intelligence
That mark his caste, explaining to the few,
(Strangers) who paused to question—all he knew—
Polite to all, but with perception keen,
Noting the nameless air, and polished mien
Of those whose birth was gentle as their mind,
And like their life, exalted and refined.
To these he spoke with softer air, that shewed
He knew and felt the deference he owed;
Yet naught of servile tone was his, but fair
And frank, to all whom he encountered there;

And in his look he bore a sense of power,
By law and justice given him in that hour—
High names, whose might the peasant and the peer
Alike submit to, and alike revere.
And oft, as there I sat, there came a sound,
Distant at first, but swift increasing round—
A low, soft murmur of advancing feet,
That, rushing, seemed on every side to meet—
Voices, that faintly fell upon the ear,
Then nearer drew, still nearer, and more near,
Till at the last—a thrilling sound was heard,
The mingling of one oft-repeated word,
Floating the crimson-draperied halls among,
Till to mine ear it seemed to merge in song,
And in each pause, those chorus'd sounds between,
Uprose one joyous cry—" THE QUEEN! THE QUEEN!"

" She comes! our Queen! at early morn
To add one crowning grace
To all the beauties that adorn
This fair, enchanted place!
Nor pomp, nor splendor gild her path,
Nor soldiers line her way,
She needs no guards, nor pomp, who hath
All hearts beneath her sway!
THE QUEEN!!

" She comes, the Queen!—No countless throng
Is gathering down these aisles,
As once—when glad she moved along,
'Mid many a nation's smiles!
Now, lowly beings round her press,
Who toilsome days have seen,
And win their meed of praise,—and bless
Their bright, their glorious Queen!
THE QUEEN!!

" With kindly glances—pausing oft,
Admiring, at each turn,
She questions still, with accents soft,
And deigns from all to learn.
And well a soul like hers may love
These tranquil morning hours,
And consecrate them—to improve
Her mind's unequalled powers!
THE QUEEN!!

" Well may her spirit glow with pride,
As still she passes on,
To think the loved one by her side,
Such matchless fame hath won!
That fame on princely virtues based,
Shall higher lustre gain,
On hist'ry's deathless pages—graced
And hallowed by her reign!
THE QUEEN!!

" Then may her future fair career,
One long ovation prove,
A brilliant path of joy—as here,
Blest by her people's love!
Still may her sword be sheathed—and war
Be lost in nobler arts,
Whilst peace reigns dovelike on our shore,
As *She* within our hearts!
THE QUEEN!!"

* * * * *

Thus with a sound of welcome—and a thrill
Of love around—she passed—and all was still.
Back to his seat the eager artist crept,
Once more his beat the calm policeman kept—
The startled stranger sought his book once more,
Whose friendly succour taught him to explore

These wondrous regions—and on every side
Attendants peered, and busy hands applied
Good taste, and skill artistic, to arrange
Their costly groups, with ever-varying change.
And so the morn passed on, until the hour
Had struck at last, that brought the envied power
Of entrance there, to teeming crowds without,
Gathered those shining palace-walls about.
Then, like a mass of waters, that had slept
Tranquil before, by powerful barriers kept,
But freed at length—that flood, with mighty force
Began its turbid and impetuous course ;
And wave on wave flowed ceaseless on, and wound
Its searching way on every side around,
Pausing, indeed, as rivers oft will pause,
Arrested by some nameless, hidden cause,
Till in a lake collected—when at length
They find an outlet for their pent-up strength,
And so flow on——thus, in this wondrous spot,
The human flood that ceased not—slackened not,
Circled around some priceless work of art,
Whose power was felt alike by every heart,

And, pausing there, in gathering surges swelled,
Till by the onward stream once more impelled.
And in that human current—that vast sea
Of restless faces—what variety!
No two the same in all the countless whole,
Each feature varying, as each separate soul!
Yet all alike engrossed with one desire,
One common aim—to see, and to admire!
And few were there, though cold, untaught or stern,
Who, once beholding, pledged not swift return,
Or gazed unmoved—where all who gazed must learn.

Then came the eve; and soon each deep-toned bell,
Rang through the throngèd pile a warning knell,
To mark the flight of one more joyous day,
And speed the crowd upon its homeward way.

So closed the show; and darkness, like a pall,
Its cold mysterious curtain spread o'er all,

Till forth arose the silver moon, and bright
Shed o'er the scene the halo of her light,
Casting a strange mysterious charm around,
Whilst nought was heard, save some low breeze's sound,
And once again that spot became enchanted ground!

Part III.

Expedition to the Crystal Palace on one particular morning—Its resemblance to the palaces and other natural edifices of ice, as seen by mariners on the Frozen Seas—After long gazing at the various Works of Art in the Exhibition, I grow weary, and occupy myself, whilst resting, in observing the various persons who pass before me—many of them well known in society—Lady —— and her beautiful daughters—The celebrated Poetess—The Iron Duke—A group of Schoolboys cheer the Duke—The sound is taken up with enthusiasm, and spreads on all sides—The School—Their progress—The Schoolmaster—He relates an anecdote of an emigrant child on board ship (a fact!), and closes the scene with a Railroad Adventure.

PART III.

One morn I sallied forth—intent to pass
The coming hours within those halls of glass:
And well content the livelong day to spend
'Mid works of art, and wonders without end.
Soft was the summer air—the sun shone bright,
That Crystal Palace was one blaze of light—
A glittering marvel—such as never yet
The gazing eye of feeble mortal met,
Save in those frozen seas, where Icebergs rise
Dreadful—majestic—towering to the skies!
There, there, indeed, are wondrous sights, unknown
Save in the voiceless regions all their own!
Castles and towers of ice—cathedral domes,
And gothic halls, and castellated homes!

And here and there a solitary arch,
A wreathèd column, or a gothic porch,
With ruined towers, that silent waters lave,
Like Venice—rising proudly o'er the wave—
And endless palaces of sparkling white,
Greeting with roseate blush the Sun's pale light.
These all are Nature's architecture—these
Her cities are—*her* Crystal Palaces!
Solemn and still—by mortal foot untrod,
Alone with Nature, and with Nature's God!
And though the trembling mariner may shrink
Before those fearful walls—as on the brink
Of some fierce peril—whilst their icy breath
Freezes his life-blood like a touch of Death—
Yet must he own them glorious!—passing fair
E'en in their dread—and feel that GOD is there!
There—in those floating worlds of ice and frost,
Borne o'er the soundless sea, and tempest-tossed,
As in the smiling tropics—where no less
His might is shown in Nature's loveliness,
Where all the glowing earth uncultured, teems
With beauty, such as bloomed by Eden's streams,

Ere, like man's soul, rebellious grew the soil,
And God condemned His erring child to toil.

But nought of fervid heat, nor endless snows,
Nor ice-bound plains, *our* happier country knows!
Each breeze that curls her circling ocean, brings
Health to this isle, and freshness on its wings.
What though her skies be clouded, and her coast
Lack the bright halo, sunnier lands may boast.
Yet are her valleys fair, her pastures green.
And beauty smiles o'er many a sylvan scene.
While fresh her climate, temperate and cool.
Like the free minds that own her moderate rule.
And gleams of sunshine, and alternate showers.
Gladden her soil, and renovate its powers,
Till from the grateful earth spring forth both fruits and flowers.

But soft, my Muse! nor thus thy flight prolong,
Sure such digressions are not meet for song!
Back to *our* crystal fane direct thy wing,
Its beauties, wonders, and adventures sing,
On that bright day, whose livelong hours I passed
Within its halls—the earliest there—and last!

Long did I wander through that fairy place,
By quiet paths I oft had learnt to trace,
Dwelling on beauteous forms, familiar grown,
Yet finding still fresh marvels, all unknown—
Till faint at last with gazing, I began
To turn from Man's unequalled works—to *Man*
Then on a quiet bench I sat—and found
Food for fresh thought in all that passed around:
Seeking—no hard nor thankless task—to trace
The soul's unuttered thoughts on every face!
In many a soft dilating eye, I saw
Joy mixed with wonder—eagerness with awe!

While sterner men, with philosophic thought,
Mused on what Labour, led by Mind, had wrought.
And giddy fair ones gazed, but heeded less
The works of art around them, than the dress:
Finding in gay capote, Parisian shawl,
Or lace-trimmed robe, more powerful charms than all.

First came a Mother, with her gentle band
Of blooming girls—those blossoms of our land!
Next a tall Bridegroom, with his youthful Bride,
Clinging with timid fondness to his side—
Then two old maids, in dreamy wonder lost,
Doubtful if joy or awe inspired them most—
Then, trooping gaily on—a childish race,
Whose silvery laughter echoed through the place—
Anon, a scared and solitary wight,
Shuffling along with pace that seemed like flight—
A Guardsman next—on duty—tired and lone.
Careless 'mid sights long since familiar grown,
And seeking *living* forms—admiring *them*
More than the fairest work, or costliest gem!

Here, a fine lady—there a feeble peer—
A tribe of whiskered, chattering Frenchmen here:
A statesman, worn with many an anxious care,
A lawyer next, and then a millionaire!
Group after group of foreign wights, who sought
With eager eye, the works *their* land had wrought.
And crowds that pressing onward—onward came.
For ever changing—and yet still the same.
Then, as I gazed, behold, a vision bright
Sudden uprose upon my charmèd sight—
A gentle lady, of majestic mien,
Of courteous presence, and of eye serene,
Whose beauty bore the sweet and nameless grace,
A noble spirit sheds o'er all the face!
And hers indeed *was* noble! with a mind
That like her form was graceful and refined!
She came,—and by her side a lovely pair—
Ah, never yet beheld I group more fair!
Two gentle daughters—each an honoured wife.
And rich in every charm that sweetens life.
The elder—long since bound in wedlock's band
To one whose name rings proudly through the land—

A man of active mind, exalted birth,
And—higher boast—of unexampled worth—
Whose life has tended to one earnest end,
The poor to raise, the helpless to befriend—
The younger, beauteous as the morn! with eyes
Tranquil and deep, as Heaven's own sapphire skies—
A fairy thing of loveliness and light,
That, once beheld, enchained the passing sight.
And, like some priceless picture—gentle word—
Or strain of softest music, oft recurred
To the worn mind, with dreams of graceful youth,
Of that sweet face—its child-like glance of truth,
And shed withal, the nameless charm that lies
In Beauty's own unequalled memories.

The crowd passed on—the three swept slowly by—
I watched them go, and scarce suppressed a sigh;
But as I lingering gazed, behold there came
Nearer and nearer, yet another dame—
A dark-eyed beauty, with those eyes of fire,
Formed to express all that they *must* inspire!

A gifted being, whose poetic powers
Can gild with light this dull cold world of ours!
Pale was her face! the wondrous things she saw
Her spirit moved with rapture less than awe—
But in her glorious eyes what passion spoke,
As in that scene her poet-soul awoke!
And to its inward strains she moved along,
Beauteous and rapt—th' acknowledged queen of song!

A moment more—she too had glided by—
Past was that regal brow—that flashing eye!
Like her own strains, her glance alone had shed
A spell around, that ceased when she had fled—
And though her image mem'ry might restore,
Yet could that nameless charm return no more.

But now upon the scene appeared a form
That erst had braved the battle and the storm—

The Iron Duke—the Captain of our age,
Whose deathless name shall shine on History's page
Whilst time remains:—with quiet step and mien,
Observant, calm, he moved upon the scene;
His warrior-head was bowed, but clear his eye,
And keen its glances as in days gone by—
And as he passed that motley crowd among,
What love and joy inspired the gazing throng!
Around his path a gathering murmur ran,
And crowds bent low, and hailed the aged man.

Well might they bend before that matchless mind,
Which genius, might, and energy combined!
For never yet did mortal eye look back
In life's decline, on more resplendent track,
Than his victorious, his undimmed career—
Our country's boast, and envious nations' fear.
I watched him long, and fondly strove to guess
What thoughts in scene so glittering, might possess
That spirit stern—In vain! no glance revealed
Aught of the mind that time had taught and steeled.

He seemed, alone, of all assembled there,
Nor for his glory, nor himself to care,
And by his powerful nature, praise and fame
Seemed all unfelt, as erst, his iron frame
Untouched had been, amid each battle's storm
That carried death to many a humbler form.

As on he moved, a little group I saw
Who on the warrior gazed with simple awe!
Young would-be warriors, who had oft-times played
At siege and battle 'neath the beech-trees' shade,
And to the thicket, fierce led on th' attack,
Till summoned by relentless school-bell back.
Beside them stood their Master, in whose face
All that was frank and kindly one might trace,
Mixed with an air of firm yet quiet rule
That well became the monarch of a school!
Short space he gazed, like them, at that great man,
Till round their ranks a soft, low murmur ran;
Then, at his nod, each little head was bared,
And with a thrill that every spirit shared,

The voice of childhood raised its silver sound
And spread the note of joyful greeting round!
Far, far it echoed through the crystal Fane
And distant crowds took up the sound again,
Till all that living concourse joined to raise
One universal shout of love and praise!

The boyish group passed on—and in its wake
I gladly followed—for sweet childhood's sake;
And oft I marked the Master pause, and oft
He spoke in tones that eager seemed, though soft,
Whilst round the little audience pressed, and strove
To catch each word of one they seemed to love.
Bright was each earnest eye, each upturned face,
Bright with the charm of childhood's guileless grace,
As they surveyed the wondrous things they passed,
And looks exchanged, or simple questions asked—
And kind the Master's favouring eye, as still
He paused, and stayed, and bade them gaze their fill.
Lifting, in arms that oft perchance had dealt
Sharp strokes for task unconned, or words mis-spelt,

Each urchin high above the crowd, to view
The wondrous things that one machine might do!
One small machine! that seemed with instinct rife,
Moving—creating—like a thing of life!
And with unvarying click, and steady tone,
Speaking one ceaseless language of its own—
Whilst o'er its movements, he that *should* be deemed
The *genius loci*—dull and lifeless seemed—
A mere machine! a well-imagined toy!
A piece of clockwork! not a breathing boy!

In silent awe that group the youth surveyed,
As 'mid the works his thin wan fingers played,
And heaps of envelopes beside him piled,
Nor paused to rest—nor spoke, nor gazed, nor smiled,
But passed 'mid envelopes each weary day,
Watching their birth, then piling heaps away,
Till his own cheek grew white and cold as they.

But time advanced—the noontide heat was passed,
And swift the wingèd hours went flying past.
The Master called his little group around,
And spoke of dinner—ah, delicious sound!
Dinner! beneath that arched and glittering dome,
How far more joyous than the meal at home!
With flowers their richest perfume breathing near,
And murmuring fountains, falling cool and clear—
Fair forms on every side—and visions bright,
All that could heighten joy,—and appetite!
The banquet spread—the happy urchins laughed;
Each pledged his comrade in the crystal draught,
And deemed it nectar; then—as all reposed
In quiet nook—some bolder wight proposed
They should the pleasant hour of rest beguile,
By tales that might call forth a tear, or smile.
Their master—would he but consent—could tell
Of many a feat performed by flood and fell,
For he had travelled, and his mind was stored
With marvels seen in distant lands explored—
Ah! *would* he tell them?
With indulgent air,
The lettered man responded to their prayer.

Fatigued he was, and fevered by the glow
Of that bright sun upon his throbbing brow;
But, stern in school, in play their kindest friend,
His time and powers he never failed to lend
For their delight; and made his aim—his rule,
T' abjure himself, and live but for his school.

And now each joyous urchin took his place,
And fixed his eyes upon that well known face,
As with contracted brow, the master sought
In mem'ry's stores, some tale with int'rest fraught.
At length, there met his roving eye, a child
That near him stood, and gazing on him, smiled,
(Perchance attracted by his kindly face)—
And with a touching and unconscious grace
Held out her little cake to him, and strove
Thus to express her artless, baby love.
Then with a smile, that o'er his features broke,
Like gleam of passing sunshine—there awoke
Within his soul, the memory of a child
That, long ago, had like this infant, smiled

Her love on him—and in his pitying heart
Had left an image, never to depart!
Awhile he paused—as though the past to scan,
Then, in an altered tone, he thus began.

1.

I've often grieved for those poor babes who roam
Across the treacherous sea—far, far from home
To distant climes—
Who learn to suffer, 'ere they've learnt to know
Aught of their own inheritance of woe,
For future times.

2.

Theirs is the frequent moan—the troubled rest—
The aching brow, that on the mother's breast
Is laid in vain—

The parched tongue theirs—the ceaseless raging thirst,
The wasted form, that should be gently nursed,
But writhes in pain!

3.

Theirs too the close confinement—worse to bear
Than all beside—the heated, noisome air
Of foul disease—
The reeking steerage, where in wintry weather,
Old age, and youth, and death must herd together,
On stormy seas.

4.

And theirs the pangs of hunger—and the cold
That bites beneath each torn and scanty fold,
And chills the bones,
Making the little flesh grow blue, and creep,
Till e'en the sternest eyes might learn to weep
For those sweet ones!

5.

Oh! I would gladly give up half the store,—
Small though the pittance be—and more, yet more—
But once to save
A few of those poor innocents from death,
Who yearly make their last sad home, beneath
The boisterous wave.

6.

Still more I long that mine were but the power
To wipe their tears—beguile their suffering hour,
And give them ease!
What holier task could Heaven's best worshipper
Follow on earth, than thus to minister
To such as these?

7.

But there is One, who knoweth all the wants
Of these poor, helpless, infant emigrants;
And He, whose will

Tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, shall lead
Them gently on—and in their utmost need
Support them still.

8.

That thought is comfort—and I turn to Him,
Trusting that all which now looks dark and dim
Shall shine forth clear,
In *His* good time—and happier worlds shall shew
The hidden cause of all those forms of woe
That haunt us here.

9.

Some years ago—in a far distant clime,
Where I an exile for a weary time,
Was forced to be,
I sailed along in a tall gallant ship;
Fair was the wind, and swift our prosp'rous trip
Across the sea.

10.

My heart was sad!—no gentle wife was by,
To chase my gloom, nor chide my frequent sigh
As oft of yore:
I was alone; but still I called to mind,
The wife, the little ones I'd left behind
On my own shore.

11.

And, as I paced the deck, I saw around
Children of every age upon the ground,
Half starved, and bare,
Who thus exposed must pass the night, whilst I,
Should in my own warm cabin snugly lie,
And slumber there.

12.

In one strange mass were mingled young and old—
Children and mothers—hungry, sad, and cold,
Beneath the sky,

Whilst strife and wrangling—with the ceaseless wail
Of those poor babes, upborne upon the gale,
Went sweeping by.

13.

My soul was wrung to hear those infants' moan!
It made me think so sadly of mine own;
And evermore,
Through the long hours *their* cherished image rose
Before me still—dispelling soft repose,
Till night was o'er.

14.

I thought that weary night would ne'er be gone!
And ah! there was one helpless little one,
Scarce two years old,
Who never ceased to cough and wail—and then
When just asleep, would wake to cough again,
And moan with cold.

15.

I gladly hailed the first faint dawn of light!
Glorious the sun uprose—undimmed and bright,
And up was I,
And forth—ere one of those around me stirred;
But still that little painful cough, I heard—
That wailing cry.

16.

Soon as the lazy steward—fierce and grim,
Had shown his swarthy face on deck—from him
I quickly won
Some sugar; and with that I took my way,
To where the little, suffering infant lay,
Still coughing on.

17.

I held a lump of sugar forth—the first
She e'er had tasted; for the babe was nursed
In woe and want;

And she was nourished with such morsels rude
As her poor parents spared from their own food,
Both coarse and scant.

18.

But ah! I never can forget the look
That touched my soul, as that poor infant took
The sweet held out!
I've often pictured, since, her little eyes,
With their own gaze of earnest, mute surprise,
Their fear and doubt.

19.

But when she found it had a pleasant taste,
She took the little, filthy crust she'd placed
Beside her there,
And gently put it in my hand, as though
The last sad morsel left her to bestow,
Should be *my* share.

20.

Cold hearts may scorn me, but I heed not them—
If the whole world should mock me, and condemn,
Fearless I'd be,
To own the tears that infant made me shed,
As, holding out her last dry crust of bread,
She gave it me!

21.

I turned and left her, for I could not speak!
Sad thoughts came o'er me, and my heart felt weak;
But all that day,
When I approached the little suffering child,
She ceased her moaning—met my gaze, and smiled,
To bid me stay!

22.

Poor little one! what has she since become?
Has her pure spirit sought its final home,
Its last repose?

Or does she suffer still? Is her young life
Still nursed 'mid pain, and penury, and strife,
And exile's woes?

23.

Alas! whate'er her doom, I know it not!
And vainly muse I on her present lot,
'Tis all unknown—
But such as she, the lowly Saviour blessed,
And on His bosom she may safely rest,
And there alone!

* * * * *

He ceased——the circling group sat mute and sad,
All mourned with him, and joyed when he was glad!
Resistless power he o'er those minds possessed,
And fired with ardour, or subdued to rest—

Woke the sweet sound of laughter's silvery tone,
Or called forth sighs responsive to his own—
Till each young spirit seemed to feel the thrill
That his inspired—and beat but at his will.

But sudden now, his searching eye he raised,
And on the silent group a moment gazed;
Then with a radiant smile, and cheerful voice,
And glance that made each little heart rejoice,
Each form draw near—and nearer—thus he broke
The spell of silence—and benignant spoke :—

A day like this—so glad—so fair—
Should not be dimmed by aught of care.
Free should each heart be! bright each thought!
Bright as these marvels man hath wrought!
Then ere once more we bend our way,
Through lands that own not Albion's sway,

I will a story tell—
A railroad tale, of long ago,
Why it recurs, I scarcely know—
Save that it me befel.

On travel bent, one morn I took
My valise, forage-cap, and book,
And soon espied a quiet nook
In railway carriage lone.
Gladly I seized it, with a sense
Of pleasant, dreamy indolence,
Joined to a thankfulness intense
That luggage I had none.
And as I gazed upon the throng,
That struggling, panting, poured along,
Old men, and maidens bright and young,
Fair dames and babes in arms—
I gloried in my own snug place,
My unincumbered, happy case,
The while I read in every face
Strange doubts and dire alarms.

Here, might be seen a toiling dame,
Fat more than fair—who panting came
By many a band-box huge oppressed,
Her helpmate carrying all the rest!
There—hobbling on, infirm and old,
Great-coated, shawled, against the cold,
A wealthy Baronet—about
To fly from London, noise, and gout.
A damsel here—of tender years,
Striving in vain to hide the tears
That o'er her gentle cheek would flow,
To think that she from home must go,
To distant school—and strive, and learn,
Nor cease to pine till her return.
At length a little group I spied,
That, modest, seemed to stand aside,
As though their poverty to hide—
A widow, meanly clad,
With famished look, and glance half wild,
Who held in either hand a child,
Whilst by her stood a lad.

Silent the latter gazed, but still
He bore a look of desperate will,
That made one pause with sudden thrill,
To think what woe and strife,
What sin, perchance, (terrific thought!)
Such look in one so young had wrought,
And dimmed his opening life!
The mother gazed on him, and strove
Vainly, it seemed—to hide her love—
And ever and anon, there stole
Tears, that defied her weak control,
Down her wan face, and told the force
Of feelings, mighty in their course!
Then did I mark his blanching cheek,
His lip that, quivering, would not speak,
And on his sad yet sullen face,
An inward struggle I could trace,
That told the beating heart below,
Was not without its storm of woe.

That humble group my fancy caught,
And soon absorbed my every thought;
I guessed, from many a murmured word
And sign—the boy had never stirred
From home before, but now must learn
By servitude his bread to earn;
And, though his heart might well-nigh break,
Must leave it for his mother's sake.
I guessed all this, but learnt far more,
In after days—that she was poor,
Yet honest—gentle in her grief,
Nor seeking pity nor relief—
That she had nursed her husband long
Through pain and want—through toil and wrong.
With earnest heart, that struggled still
To bend beneath th' Almighty Will,
Until at length she feeble grew,
With fluttering breath—and then she knew
Disease must soon her life destroy,
And she from home must send her boy,
To learn a servant's trade, and make
Kind patrons, for his brothers' sake.

She died at length—as die the just,
In perfect peace—in humble trust—
And left her son her fondest love,
Her infants, to the Heaven above!

This tale I learnt in after days—
But now my railroad-story stays;
And if I thus digress—*our* stay
Beside this fount shall last the day.

Whilst earnest, I the group surveyed,
And many an inward comment made,
Who should my solitude invade
    But two uproarious boys?
Followed, full soon, by lady fair;
Then by two men of sober air,
    Who seemed averse to noise.
Silent awhile all sat, and gazed,
For some brief space, as though amazed:

Then sought, with grave and sidelong look,
To read their neighbour as their book.

But whilst I inly strove to scan—
Sly as the rest—my fellow man,
Resolved, ere long, his mind to prove—
Sudden, the train began to move;
And, as it slow advanced, I caught
One face with bitterest anguish fraught—
That poor lone widow, who had kept
The self-same place—and gazing, wept,
Stretching her arms out towards her child,
With look convulsed, and gesture wild;
Whilst by her side each infant boy
Shouted, and clapped his hands for joy,
As passed the train in gallant trim,
A perfect miracle to him!

On, on we hastened—smoothly on,
And soon I thought she must be gone—

That mother!—no!—she still was there,
Standing with arm upraised in air,
The silent image of despair!
At length the last faint glimpse was o'er:
I gazed—and caught her form no more!
Then fast we sped—and faster yet—
But, ah! I could not soon forget
That anguished tone, that arm upraised,
Those eyes that through their tear-drops gazed:
And oft the picture would recur,
And raise a pitying sigh for her!

But as we journeyed swiftly on,
My various comrades, one by one,
(Soon as by dint of toil and nerve,
I had o'ercome their cold reserve,)
Left me—to hail their journey's end,
And some expecting, well-known friend.
All—all, save one—the lady fair!
And she at last, with timid air,

Beckoned the guard, and in his ear,
Whispered somewhat of "*man*" and "*fear*,"
Which I bethought me not to hear.
But the soft caution was in vain!
In her own seat she must remain,
So I, with grave, abstracted look,
Began to puzzle o'er my book,
When lo!—a stranger, somewhat late,
Broke in upon our *tête-à-tête*.
The man was scarce of middle size,
With fat, round face, and staring eyes,
That looked perpetual wild surprise.
One short, quick glance he gave—and then
Deigned not to turn, nor gaze again,
But seemed as though about to steep
His senses in lethargic sleep.
And long he slumbered, as the train
Pursued its onward way,
Till it appeared he would remain
Thus, till the close of day.
And I myself, with heavy look,
And somewhat sleepy frame,

Gazed first on him, then on my book,
And then at that fair dame.
When sudden! with a furious start,
And haggard eyes, and lips apart,
And look all troubled and amazed,
Straight in his seat, his form he raised,
And then by turns upon us gazed.

My fair companion scarce suppressed
A shriek of fear!—too well her breast
The trembling passion knew;
And to my side she quickly sprung,
Whisp'ring with parched and trembling tongue,
"Ah! what—what *will* he do?"
Her terror scarce he seemed to mark,
His looks more desp'rate grew—and dark—
His cheek as pale as death,
Then brightest crimson—and I saw,
With fear almost akin to awe,
His quickly labouring breath.

At length I spoke in soothing strain—
Could I do ought to ease his pain?
What was its cause? and would he bear
To trust him to my willing care?
Soon would they stop th' advancing train,
And then prompt aid he might obtain.

He turned, and fixed his staring eyes
Full on my face, with wild surprise.
Help!—it was useless—he was well!
Nor would he the misfortune tell,
That thus had stirred his inmost soul
Beyond his fortitude's control!
Yet it was hard—so hard to bear,
It well might goad him to despair!
I strove to soothe him, for I deemed
His feverish mind unsettled seemed,
And never sure, more troubled mien,
Nor face more sad nor wild was seen!
Nor did I seem to ease his grief,
Nor bring his suffering soul relief.

At length, more tranquil grown, he heard,
In softer mood, each murmured word;
And then, at last, with gloomy air,
Whispered the tale of his despair.

He by another train had come
That morn, from his accustomed home;
  And from his aching head
His hat had taken—thoughtless fool!
And, to preserve his forehead cool,
  Had donned his cap instead.
That train he left—when to our own
  He hurried—somewhat late;
And for awhile he had not known
  His hapless, cruel fate.
But long, long since, that train had gone
  Upon its path of fire,
And, like the wind, was hurrying on
  To many a distant shire!
Yet in one carriage-roof, it bore
  A treasure he had left,

Alas! he might not see it more—
He was of *hat* bereft!
Yet bound was he to ancient hall,
Where dwelt kind friends—familiar all—
And—why the truth disguise?
A lady—fair as poets dream,
Who, in his eyes, could make earth seem
One beauteous paradise!
How could he friends so cordial meet?
How one so fair and cherished greet,
Without his *hat*?—
His bitter pain
Was such, that I could scarce refrain
From laughter—yet withal, I strove
To reason calmly, and to prove
In days like these, a hat might still
Be lost, and yet replaced at will.
In the first quiet country town
He'd buy one better than his own.

"Ah, no!" he cried, "ah! never more,
Should not the Fates his hat restore,
Could he resume his wonted place
Among his friends—nor show his face!
Rather he'd seek some lonely spot,
And there, forgetting, be forgot!
How could he bear the scorn of some,
The smiles of others, in that home,
Without his hat?"—
"But why?" I cried,
"Why not another hat provide?
"Or wear your forage-cap instead,
"Much it becomes your air and head!
"The lady of your love might sure,
"For some brief space such cap endure!
"Nor deem your heart less true,—less fond,
"Because a forage-cap you donned!"

He gave a look of horror wild,
And clasped his hands, and ghastly smiled.

"Alas!" he cried, "you little know
"The anguish of my secret woe,
"Nor yet how deep the love, that now
"Perchance may meet its final blow!
"Within my fair one's soul, I trace
"A love of beauty and of grace,
"That dwells in every noble heart,
"Devoted to the cause of Art;
"Beauteous herself,—she cannot brook
"On aught unlovely e'en to look!
"And I have seen her turn away
"From scanty locks, or whiskers grey!
"And yet—she wears a lock of hair—
"Ah, me! with what a tender air
"She took the gift!—and, now,—and now—
"(Gaze not upon my burning brow!)
"What rage! what anguish will she feel,
"When Fate the secret shall reveal—
"*My hat is lost!*"—
"But what of that?"
I cried!—"your *hair*, and not your hat

"She values!" . .

"True!" he made reply,

"But *there* is all my agony,

"*For in my hat my hair doth lie!*"

He paused—and in his wild despair,
Snatched from his head, with frantic air,
His forage-cap—and smooth and clean
As barber's block, his crown was seen!

At that dread moment—fraught with awe,
The train arrived,—and then, I saw
A group upon the platform near,
Who in each carriage strove to peer
As though awaiting kindred dear.
He caught their forms!—and, with a start
And groan, that from his inmost heart
Came bursting forth—with furious clap,
On his bald head, replaced his cap!

Then forth he dashed! and, plunging through
That startled group, his ticket threw
To one, who stood beside a door,—
Passed it—and so was seen no more!
Whether to lonely shades he fled,
To hide his sorrow and his head,
Or to his lady-love declared
His grief—and skull and secret bared—
And she, with gentle words, and fond,
Told him her love was far beyond
All paltry thoughts of curling hair,
And that his *heart* was all her care—
I know not—for I never more
Beheld him!—and my tale is o'er!

Part IV.

Lamentation of a Lady in search of her missing Daughter—Her progress through the Exhibition—The recovery of the Truant.

PART IV.

Once, as I sauntered through the Fane, I caught
A glimpse of one who wandered, half distraught,
With hurried step, flushed face, and aspect wild,
Seeking on every side her missing child!
So strange her aspect, and so fixed her stare,
I followed—fearing lest her wild despair
Should to some act of frenzied folly tend,
Needing the help of stranger, or of friend.
Uncertain was her pace,—now, like the wind,
Now slow, with timid doubtful glance behind;
And, as she went, she never ceased to talk,
Nor paused one moment in her hurried walk,

But still, in all the muttered sounds I heard,
"My daughter!" was the oft-recurring word!
And as I followed swift, and followed long,
Threading, as best I might, that countless throng,
This was the burden of her measured song.

1.

My daughter! oh, my daughter! Where on earth can
she be gone to?
I can never hope to find her, in so large a place as
this!
I know 'twas done on purpose,—when I hoped to meet
Sir John, too;
And now I recollect she *said* she thought that we should
miss!

2.

My daughter! oh, my daughter! Have you seen my darling daughter?

I'm sure there's no foretelling what a moment may produce!

Captain Jones was talking to her—*I* was looking at the water,

And, lo! she fled!—I've warned her not to flirt, but where's the use?

3.

My daughter! oh, my daughter! In these horrid holes and corners,

I defy the well-conducted of society to meet!

Although it's just the place for your captains, flirts, and scorners,

Who pride themselves in walking their poor mothers off their feet!

4.

My daughter! oh, my daughter!—I'll search through the French department,
Some nonsense about *tapestry*, I'm sure I heard him say;
And now it's pretty clear, what that cunning piece of art meant,
'Twas just a quiet hint he gave, for both to steal away.

5.

My daughter! oh, my daughter!—France is just the the place to hide in!
I've always entertained the worst opinion of the French!
But to think a girl should do so, that one's taken such a pride in,
It's enough to make one mad! and *all* a mother's love to quench!

6.

It s very fine to talk of all this "meeting of the nations,"
And of "brotherhood," and "fellowship," and all that kind of stuff!
Defend *me* from such "meetings!" why, they're nothing but flirtations!
And the "brothers" are but moonshine! they're all *lovers*, sure enough!

7.

Good morning, Mrs. Thompson? You behold me in a fever!
What I've suffered, can't be *ever* told, of mental wear and tear!
If you value *your* sweet daughter, let me warn you not to leave her,
If you turn your head a moment, she'll be off, you don't know where!

8.

I've lost *my* Angelina! and I know your sweet compassion,
When I tell you that I've sought her, all about this dreadful place!
Keep an eye upon Miss T!—she has quite an air of fashion,
And, excuse me—*entre nous*—what a *very* perfect face!

9.

The monster! . . . If I did'nt catch her smiling! but, no wonder!
She always turns away, whene'er I strive her eye to catch,
And her hideous daughter, too! with her eyes a mile asunder,
And her mouth from ear to ear!—*she's* a pretty girl to watch!

10.

Sir John! oh, there's Sir John!—oh, stop! Sir John!
—my precious daughter! . . .
He's past!—he never heeded me!—alas, what *shall* I do?
If these faint tones had reached his ear, he surely would
have sought her,
And whilst intent on catching *her*, she might have
caught *him*, too!

11.

Ah! who can tell the plague it is, to have a flirting
daughter?
I'm sure I've tried to lead her in the way that she
should go!
Cours German and Italian, and the concertina taught
her,
And a hundred other things, *I* never learnt at all,
I know!

12.

I've pinched myself to dress her well, my base, ungrateful daughter!
Retrenched in caps and bonnets to a fearful, vast amount,
And long, I've been aware, my short existence would be shorter,
For all the self-denial I've endured on her account.

13.

And yet, it's all in vain, alas! what good will it have wrought her,
Should talents, such as hers are, on a *Jones* be thrown away?
A vulgar, pushing captain! from some wretched country quarter,
Who has nothing in the world, but his moustaches and his pay!

14.

Policeman! stay, Policeman!—I'm determined I'll report her!

'Twill teach her to behave so!—yes, 'twill serve her very right!

Policeman!—A man, somewhere here, has robbed me of my daughter!

Do find him, if you please! for I'm quite distracted,—quite!

15.

I soon shall faint away, no doubt, Policeman!—but don't mind me!

Concentrate all your energies to trace the missing pair!

And gratitude,——but, bless me! why, they're standing close behind me,

And looking just as innocent as lambs, I do declare!

16.

I scarcely can contain myself! Well done! my gentle daughter!

You've proved how much you care for *me*, or any wish of mine!

For you, Sir! from this moment, you shall ne'er again escort her,

And the honour of your visits, I henceforward must decline!

17.

What!—" followed close behind me!" " quite amazed to see me walk so!"

How *can* you look at me, and think to speak such monstrous words?

I wonder that the statues don't blush scarlet, when you talk so,

The floor don't open at the seams, and let you through the boards!

18.

"Engaged to Captain Jones!—engaged!" . . . What words are those, my daughter?

Ah! never sure can I survive the anguish of this day!

Go,—quit my sight for ever!—Oh! police! some Cologne water!

I'm childless, now,—and going . . . ah! . . . to faint quite dead away!

Part V.

Description of two persons seen accidentally at the Crystal Palace, and their progress throughout the building—Catastrophe at the end—Their Story related.

PART V.

It chanced that on a certain day
As I pursued my lonely way
Across the Nave, a form I spied
That made me pause, and turn aside.

Beside the Fount, one young and fair
Stood—wrapt in idle dreaming there!
Graceful her form! her eye of blue
Shone bright with Heaven's own matchless hue!
Yet o'er her brow a shade of thought
Seemed still with pensive sadness fraught,
And, as she gazed upon the play
Of that clear fountain's feathery spray,

A something in her look and air
Told of an inward, deep despair.

I watched her long—as lone she stood
Half bending o'er the watery flood,
Heedless of all surrounding things,
Wrapt in her own imaginings.
I watched her!—till a sudden start,
And eyes of fire, and lips apart,
Told that her ear had caught one tone,
And that she was no more alone!

Ah! who that gazed upon that face
Upturned and bright, could fail to trace
An angel's nature in those eyes,
A woman's tenderest sympathies?
There was deep love, and deeper truth,
The fond, pure trust of early youth,
The earnest worship, that would lay
Her very soul beneath the sway

Of him she loved—nor picture aught
Of bliss, but what his presence wrought.

She spoke not—but what words could tell
Her soul's deep worship half so well,
As that one look—when first she heard
His voice—that all her being stirred!
Like some soft wind, that breathes unseen
The ash-tree's feathery boughs between,
Till—quivering in that viewless air
Each leaf its silver lining fair,
Upturns, to meet the dazzling light
And trembles—virgin-like—in white—
So did that single word—that tone
Waft, with a magic of its own,
Each darker thought of hers apart,
And bring to light her spotless heart.

I turned to him—and silent strove
To fathom his—of such deep love,

The treasured object—and I sought
The spell that with such power had wrought.
His form was bowed—but not with age,
For little past the earlier stage,
Of manhood he—yet pale his cheek,
And spiritless his step, and weak!
And in his eye methought I read
Of hopes destroyed, ambition fled,
And all that loftier shade of thought
That clings to those whom grief hath taught;
Whom fell disease, with blighting breath
Hath driven to the gates of Death!
Yet was there something in his mien
Though sad—that spoke a soul serene—
That told the storms of passion past,
And he had found repose at last.
And, when he turned his languid face
On her he loved—a nameless grace,
A brighter glory o'er it shone,
And every darker shade was gone!

Yes, she was loved! with all the love
A soul could give, that soared above
Earth's miry scenes—and longed to rise
Immortal—to its native skies.
Yes, she was loved! If not like him,
Yet might the white-robed cherubim
Have smiled upon that love—so free
From aught of Earth's idolatry!

They turned away—and side by side,
Her arm his sole support and guide,
They mingled with the living tide,
That like a river, full and free,
Kept rolling on unceasingly.
I watched them long—as still she strove
With something more than sister's love,
To shield him from the contact rude
Of that unheeding multitude;
And, with a sweet and modest grace
That lighted all her angel face,

Told him—(how much she had to tell!)—
Of all she saw, that pleased her well!
Pausing before some beauteous form,
That seemed her very soul to warm
With something of that holier fire,
The master-works of art inspire!
And thus they wandered on—and oft
Conversed in tones subdued and soft,
And, when a vacant seat she spied,
She bade him rest—and stood beside,
Bending to catch with eager ear
Each faint low tone she loved to hear.
What was the busy crowd to her?
She heeded not its coil and stir!
The rush, as though of mighty wings,
The glitter of ten thousand things—
The onward rolling of the stream—
All was a faint and passing dream.
One unit in that motley whole,
Her ear engaged—absorbed her soul,
And little dreamt she, how I stood
Watching her face, so pure and good,

And deeming *that* a fairer sight
Than all around of fair and bright—
For what supremest work of art
Can equal a devoted heart?

At length, I missed them. Borne along
Like fragile leaf by waters strong,
I reached at length a quiet shore,
And turned—but *they* were seen no more.
Vainly I strove their path to trace
Gazing in every gentle face,
And oft returning, as I caught
What seemed a glimpse of those I sought—
In vain! the gentle pair were gone,
And in that crowd I felt alone.

An hour had passed; and sad and slow
I turned my weary steps to go,
And drifting freely with the tide,
Beheld at length the portals wide,

Through which, into the world's rough sea,
That river flowed impetuously.
Whilst there I waited—on mine ear
Sudden there rose a cry of fear,
And voices mingled, with a sound
That spread a greater fear around:
One there had sunk!—about to die!
And "Water!" "Help!" was all the cry!

A pause—and moans as though of pain!
Oft hurried questions—asked in vain—
A struggling—voices loud and strong—
A swaying of th' impatient throng—
And then it parted—and there came
A senseless form borne forth—the same
That I had seen an hour ago,
Moving with step so faint and slow,
Amid that gay and brilliant show!

Thus I beheld again the pair—
For she—the gentle girl, was there!
And, though her cheek was pale as death,
And quickly came her heaving breath,
Yet did her soul retain its power
E'en in the anguish of that hour;
And with a look intent and deep
She gazed upon his breathless sleep,
As though she caught some secret sign,
Invisible to eyes like mine.

His face was of a ghastly white:
Ah me! it was a fearful sight!
Stained by his life-blood's crimson tide
Which all his form and garments dyed!
Yet she!—I watched her clear blue eye
Fixed on that face unswervingly;
And well did its fond gaze express
The rapture of her tenderness—
A love before which grief grew dim,
That merged her very soul in him!

They bore him past—and one I knew,
A being generous, kind, and true,
Who ne'er beheld disease nor grief,
But he essayed to bring relief—
Whose life was all benevolence—
In his own chariot bore him thence!

From that good man, whose heart beat high
With pity's tenderest sympathy,
I learnt a tale of grief and care,
The story of that faithful pair:
And if, as I recount it here,
It should beguile you of a tear,
Deem it not strange—for well I ween
A fonder pair was never seen,
Nor sadder tale has often been!

Fair is our own beloved land,
And fair her country homes, that stand
Embowered within the leafy shade
Of some sequestered smiling glade—
Or from a wooded slope look down
On village spire and distant town—
Or 'mid the meadows whitely gleam
Beside some clear melodious stream—
Or gaze upon the furzy heath
Sweet with the thyme's delicious breath,
While many a gabled point appears,
Memorial of departed years,
With windows quaint, and antique mien
And mellow hue, that peeps between
Some cedar's grave and solemn green!

Yes! these are pleasant homes and bright!
England can boast no fairer sight;
And though her skies be dull,

Yet sweeter far her village chimes,
Each shady nook, each grove of limes,
Than all the boast of sunnier climes,
More proudly beautiful!

'Twas just in such a rural scene,
A quiet valley, cool and green,
That rose to view a long thatched roof,
Seeming as though it stood aloof,
From all the world, so grey and lone
It loomed, 'mid forests of its own.
Not oft did strangers there intrude,
Nor footsteps rash, nor voices rude
Disturbed the peaceful solitude
Of so serene a place;
But never yet did home of earth
Contain a pair of higher worth,
Nor echo to the joyous mirth
Of a more noble race.
Stately the mother, fair and tall—
Fair were the daughters, one and all;

And each, the days of childhood gone,
Was courted first, then wooed and won,
And early left her parents' side,
To be a glad and cherished bride.
One still remained, and she had said,
Sighing—that she would never wed!
Men were deceitful! hard to prove!
None that had tried could win her love!
Oft had they striven: all in vain;
She cared not they should try again!
'Twas hard that they for her should grieve,
But she her home would never leave!

Such were her words—but they who boast
They fear not Love, he strives the most
To bend beneath his sway;
And never proved he yet his power,
As in one memorable hour
Upon the gentle May!

The morn was in its freshest bloom,
The flowers were breathing soft perfume,
As she, unconscious of her doom
Sped through the shady grove!
Her heart was bounding with the sense
Of youthful life, of joy intense;
And Nature's own sweet eloquence
Attuned her heart to Love!

Beyond the forest dark and lone
A lady dwelt, who grief had known—
Whose sad and solitary hearth
The girl oft gladdened by her mirth;
But on this day, her vacant chair
Was filled; she found a stranger there!

A stranger!—one she ne'er had seen!
Of tall slight form and noble mien!

Whose eyes had something in their light
That haunted you, like dreams at night,
Seeming, where'er they gazed, to draw
The very soul of what they saw—
Whose voice was low, and yet its tone
Had such a magic of its own,
That none could e'er forget, who heard
The music of each gentle word.
Such was the man, who in that hour,
Love had decreed should prove his power;
Such was the man who, day by day
Grew dearer to the gentle May!

Sweet was their youthful dream of love!
The sunny mead—the vocal grove—
The stream's clear waters rippling low,
Bore witness to each murmured vow!
And never yet in poet's dream,
Did aught on earth more beauteous seem,
Than those deep, lonely shades,

Where naught, beside the fitful song
Harmonious, of the feathered throng,
Or whispering breeze, was heard among
The forest's green arcades.

Alas, for mortals! short their bliss!
And ecstacy as sweet as this,
Can never last—too deep—too pure
For fallen nature to endure.
There came a change, replete with woe—
A hasty summons—he must go,
And leave the scenes where first they met.
To toil, and struggle, and regret!
Yes—he must struggle hard and long,
And mingle with the selfish throng
Of crowded cities, toiling still
With all that high devoted will,
That love so fervent could inspire
To one whose very soul was fire!

Young though he was—his simple name
Had early won its meed of fame;
And wondrous things did they foretell
Of his career, who knew him well.
For he had talents rare and high,
The most unfaltering energy,
A fertile fancy, and a mind
In which both sense and wit combined,
Enriched with classic lore:
And, from his boyhood, still his aim
Had been, unswervingly, the same,
To gild with bright undying fame
The cherished name he bore!
But now, in love's undaunted might,
He armed him for a sterner fight,
Resolved to force his claim:
And, (felling first that fiend, the Law,)
Win, through its sharp and iron claw
Fortune, and home, and fame.

Long, long he toiled: forswearing all
That gay men *pleasure* oft miscall,
And grudging nature e'en the hours
Claimed as her right, for o'ertasked powers.
He spent each day in toil: at night,
He pored beside th' expiring light,
And when at length he closed his eyes,
Dreamt ever, it was time to rise,
Starting in fear and feverish haste
That for the time all slumber chased.
Such ceaseless toil no power could stand—
His soul, indeed, he *could* command,
And that should never quail!
But pale, and paler grew his cheek—
His pulse more fluttering and weak,
And soon his strength 'gan fail!
Yet would he not relax, still on
With dauntless heart he pressed;
Not till the giant task was done,
Not till the prize he sought was won,
Would he consent to rest.

And time passed on, and whilst his fame
Still higher rose each day,
More and more precious he became
To her—his own sweet May!
Not oft they met: the days were rare
That he could give to love,
Yet would she mark his languid air,
And with a sigh, reprove,
The stern resolve, that urged such toil
As ne'er was known before,
And she would bid him rest awhile,
And strive and fret no more.
But, when his eyes on her he turned,
And whispered, soft and low,
That not until the prize was earned
Would he the toil forego,
And that the cherished hope was worth
More than a life had given,
All that he valued most on earth,
All—save his hopes of Heaven—
She listened, and the beaming light
Of those dark eyes, intensely bright,

The wondrous magic of their gaze
That haunted, as in bygone days,
That smile, that seemed to her to shine
With something of a light divine,
And his bright cheek's transparent hue,
Brighter than childhood ever knew—
All served to calm her anxious fears,
To bid her dream of future years,
Whilst hope beguiled her yielding mind,
And love's enchantment kept her blind.

Yet were there some, who inly grieved,
And thought the gentle girl deceived;
Who saw too well the lurking trace
Of dread disease upon his face,
And deemed that earnest soul of fire
Would to another clime aspire.
Her parents spoke, but spoke in vain—
She would not hear of grief, or pain!
How could she grieve, when he was near?
How tremble, when he knew not fear?

Rather, she looked with joy and pride
To that blest time, when by his side,
She should pursue her path through life,
A cherished and devoted wife.

And now their bliss seemed all secure!
The time was fixed—true! he was poor,
But yet a pittance he had gained,
And wealth, ere long, should be attained.
All, e'en her anxious parents, said
'Twas better now that they should wed.

She saw him, with a thankful heart,
And scarce one lingering look, depart!
For sweet his mission! to provide
A home for her, his gentle bride,
And once that welcome labour o'er,
He should return, to part no more!

Ah! fatal hopes! ah! fond deceit!
Ah! dream by absence made more sweet!
Too soon, alas, to die!
Too soon pale fear, and hushed suspense,
And anguish, harrowing and intense,
And fever's own dread eloquence
Proclaim the trial nigh!
Lo! it is on him!—grim disease
That not e'en *love* can e'er appease
Spurns at his youth!—is on him now,
And fells him with one murderous blow!
See, it is on him!—with a grip
Savage and fierce, that shall not slip,
Nor cease one thrill of those sharp pangs,
Till it hath fixed its iron fangs
Deep in that heart—and chilled its glow,
And brought the towering spirit low!

And sad it is, to mark its trace
Upon that intellectual face!

The lofty brow—whose clammy skin,
Conceals a maddening world within—
The straining eye, the wasted cheek,
Which faintest tints of violet streak—
The pale, parched lips, through which the breath
Comes labouring—gasping—from beneath—
The hollow cough that fain would wrest
The very life from out that breast—
The restless limbs that seem to know
Ease but in tossing to and fro,
And all the pulse's maddening play,
Wild fever wields within her sway,
Making the blood through every vein,
Rush like a stream of fiery pain—
Ah! 'tis a sad, a solemn sight,
The strong man crushed in youthful might,
Prostrate—resistless—prone!
One too, who in the war of life
Hath risen victorious from the strife,
Hurled from his reason's throne!

Yet, after long and dreary hours,.
A something, like the breath of flowers,
Soothing, serene, and low,
Falls on his weary soul like balm,
Bringing once more a sense of calm
To his worn heart and brow.
Hushed steps are stealing round his bed,
Kind hands support his aching head,
And sounds melodious play
Like faintest music, through the gloom
Of that dark, phantom-haunted room,
Chasing the fiends away.
Soft fingers on his brow assuage,
By their cool touch, his fever's rage,
Leaving a charm where'er they move,
The charm of deep, undying love!
And as the mist that long hath lain
With leaden weight upon his brain,
Rolls clear away, as vapours dun
Retreat before the glorious sun—
Slowly there rises on his sight,
A form, majestic, fair, and bright,

Whose features, long familiar grown,
Have in serener days been known;
And, as the vision multiplies,
One lovelier yet, whose deep blue eyes
Speak more than woman's love, appears,
Gazing upon him through her tears—
Nor doth the vision fade away—
It is his own—his gentle May!

And from that hour he ceased to pine—
The narrow chamber grew divine,
Illumined like the silent grove
By the poetic light of love!
The city's sky, obscured with smoke
Through which the sun but rarely broke,
The city's din—the stir and strife
That told of teeming London life—
The muddy street—the prospect drear—
The cries abhorrent to his ear—
The wearing, ceaseless, heavy tread
Of feet in chamber overhead—

Those thousand jarring, fretting things
That sickness, pent in cities, brings—
All these, when *she* was near—seemed naught,
For she absorbed his every thought,
And, when she soothed him, hope once more
Seemed half his vigour to restore,
Lending his fancy wings to rise
Bright as of old, to love's own skies.

At length, with pitying voice and heart,
The mother said they must depart!
Much had it taxed her strength, to make
So far a journey for his sake,
But she had learnt his piteous case,
And marked her child's distracted face,
And sighing said that she would dare
All things, to save her from despair.
If he *must* die, her gentle May
Should see him ere he passed away!
If not——in short, they came to bless
And soothe him with their tenderness—

With woman's love and care, to save,
That lone one from an opening grave.

But fear was over now!—ere long
He would be free once more, and strong;
And they must leave him to prepare
Their home for him with jealous care:
For he should quit the town, and come
Back to that loved and tranquil home,
Where they could nurse him—tend him—make
All things subservient for his sake,
And quiet rest should soon restore
Health to his languid frame once more.

He came—a shadowy thing, and frail,
That looked as though each passing gale
Would waft him death—so thin, so weak,
So hollow his transparent cheek—

His eyes so prominent and bright
With pale consumption's lurid light—
Consumption! . . she who fairest shines,
When surest still she undermines,
And mocks each heart she soon must rend
With hopes, that only death can end!
Yet had he rallied, and they thought
Their watchful love a cure had wrought;
But brief, alas! th' apparent gain!
They soon perceived all care was vain;
It might console his troubled hours,
But not renew exhausted powers;
Soon would those lustrous eyes be dim,
And all earth's glories fade for him!

Strange! that the fond girl never saw
What all beside perceived with awe—
Stern death's approach! . . Her sanguine soul
Rose buoyantly from grief's control,
And whilst their graver hearts might grieve
With her—to *hope* was to *believe!*

But he !—ah, *he* had learned at length
The secret of his failing strength !
The solemn truth that he must *die*,
Had reached his spirit silently,
And in long wakeful nights of pain,
When strangely lucid was his brain,
Oft had he wrestled with that thought,
And the fierce agony it brought !
Yes !—he had battled with the strife
Like one who loves—who worships life !
But now t'was o'er—he could not live !
He knew t'were worse than vain to strive ;
Rather, like heathen sage of old
Would he in decent robe enfold
His face ; and calm, without one sigh,
Prepare his yielding soul to die !

To die ! in manhood's earliest stage !
To die ! but not like heathen sage !
He might not mourn, nor count it loss
Within the shadow of the Cross,

To yield his life to Him who gave,
Who shunned not death, nor loathed the grave.
He might not mourn—though one he left,
Of love, and joy, and hope bereft!
She should but follow, in the dim
And misty future—joining him!
And he would leave her still as free,
As one who loved so well, could be!
No vows should bind—no dearer tie
Link her to one condemned to die.

Hard was the fight, but earnest prayer
His sinking soul sustained,
That still upheld him 'gainst despair,
That still the vict'ry gained!
She little dreamed, who each night slept
Youth's tranquil, happy sleep,
What lonely heart, its vigil kept,
What eyes but waked to weep!
Well might she sleep, poor blooming May!
Too soon condemned to mourn

The hopes that blessed her life's young day,
Gone——never to return!

One day, they sauntered through the grove,
Where first he whispered words of love.
T'was early morn—and fairer sky
Ne'er gladdened May's enchanted eye!
A thousand birds were on the wing,
Or carolled the return of spring!
The primroses and violets, spread
Like fairy carpet, wooed their tread!
Each infant bud that lay enshrined
In mantle green with crimson lined,
Pining to greet the sunbeams—burst
The bands its tender life had nursed—
The stream, careering in its course,
Sang, from its inmost heart, rejoice!
And all the earth gave out a sound
Of teeming, gladsome life around!

But in the midst of this fair scene,
One moved, with feeble step and mien,
To whom not all its joys could bring
Hope to behold another spring!
He came—supported by her arm,
Whose love formed now his greatest charm,
And, as she lent her gentle aid
To guide his steps, he inly prayed
For blessings on that youthful head,
When *he* should rest among the dead.

And soon, within that budding grove,
With spring around, and heaven above,
He spoke,—and in that solemn hour,
More than his wonted grace and power
Inspired his words,—as soft and low,
He told her of the coming woe.
To die!—to leave her!—to become
Naught but a memory in her home!
To yield her up,—his hope, his aim,
His watchword on the road to fame,—

To feel he might not blight her life
By that sweet tie—the name of Wife—
But that she still must struggle on,
And bear her bitter grief, *alone!*—
Ah! it was hard, and yet,—and yet—
He could not wish her to forget!
Rather, he trusted love so deep,
Would pure and unforgotten sleep,
Though time a softer shade would throw
Upon the memory of its woe;
And other hopes, and brighter hours,
Should strew her youthful path with flowers.
For him—he sought that solemn Bourne,
From whence no trav'ler might return;
But it was well,—the things of earth
Had lost for him their former worth—
Ambition's fever, love of gain,
And envious toil, were worse than vain!
One silent prayer, one hope of Heaven,
Were more than all that they had given.
And he should gently close his eyes,
To ope them on serener skies.

Long, long he spoke, as speechless, pale,
She listened to the harrowing tale,
With lips apart, and tearless gaze,
And look of fearful strange amaze!
One might have thought her senses gone,
And that soft heart transformed to stone.
He strove to soothe,—and bade her rest
Her head awhile upon his breast—
He marvelled not she should bewail
So stern a doom, so sad a tale!
But his the fault; for, long ago,
He had foreseen the coming woe,
And pictured forth his early fate,
Which *she* had learnt thus, all too late!
Yet it had been so sweet to prove
The depth, the fervour of her love,
That he had still delayed, and sought
To banish the obtruding thought,
In vain;—but now, when hope was o'er
Her gentle life he'd grieve no more!
She should not see him day by day,
Slowly and sadly pine away,

Nor would he wring her tenderness,
By all the anguish and distress
That waits on death: he could not bear
That she should know that *last* despair!
No,—they must part! and she should make
One last fond effort for his sake,
And bid him go—
At this, she turned,
Her very soul within her burned—
And all the anguish that had wrung
Her youthful heart, and chained her tongue,
Came bursting forth, in one loud wail,
That made his inmost spirit quail.
And long she wept—and weeping strove
In language mute, to paint her love.
Her arms around his form she threw,
And to his bosom closely drew,
His wasted hands she wildly pressed
Upon her brow, her lips, her breast,
And held him with convulsive clasp,
As though she sought to rend the grasp

Of Death, whose hand was o'er him thrown,
And thus preserve him for her own.
And, by degrees, her fiercer grief
In bursts like these, found some relief;
Until, at length, its rage was spent,
As through wild tears it found a vent,
And in her heart she breathed a prayer,
Which, soothing, left a blessing there,—
And, like a child, whose passion past,
Sinks into deeper rest at last,
So was she calmed,—nor did the gush
Of grief disturb her spirit's hush,
Till, in the end, her voice awoke,
And thus, amid the silence, spoke :—

1.

Ah! do not leave me!—talk no more of leaving!
Where should my soul find rest when thou wert gone?
There is no sorrow like that last bereaving,
No anguish, like the pang of parting—none!

2.

Talk not of leaving! Have we not together
Trod earth's green paths, with but one hope—one heart?
And, when we thus beguiled the sunny weather,
Shall we, when skies grow dim and cheerless, part?

3.

No!—to thy fate my love henceforth must bind me,
Living—yet losing thee,—would not be life!
If I have loved thee absent—thou shalt find me
Love with a holier fervour, as thy *Wife!*

4.

Lo! *I* am strong!—my youthful blood is flowing
Swift through each vein, with impulse wild and free,
And love like mine—of Heaven's own sweet bestowing,
Perchance may waft my stronger life to thee!

5.

That love shall form a barrier all around thee,
Earth and its woes shall have no power to break;
Strife shall not touch, nor wrongs, nor malice wound thee,
All thou *shouldst* bear, I'll suffer for thy sake!

6.

'Suffer!'—ah, no!—the word my heart belieth,
Sorrow, endured for thee, can ne'er be pain—
Rather—I'll bless each moment as it flieth,
If griefs I bear,—to thee, beloved, be gain!

7.

Lo! *I* am strong,—but yet my heart is stronger!
Hope, like each pulse, is bounding swift and high,
Still, it assures me, we shall grieve no longer,
Thou shalt be mine—mine own—*thou shalt not die!*

8.

Ah! to that voice enraptured, let me listen!
Break not the charm! it is so hard to grieve!
Still on my youthful cheek the tear-drops glisten,
Let hope dispel them!—grant one short reprieve!

9.

May it not be?—Then talk no more of leaving!
Think what to me, the remnant of thy life!
Give me, at least, the one dear right of grieving,—
Leave me not hopeless—*Let me be thy Wife!*

10.

What love but thine, could soothe my selfish sorrow?
Who could resign me to thy loss, but *thou?*
Think of the peace, the hope, my soul may borrow,
If at thy feet I sit, and learn them now.

11.

Lo! I have won!—These precious tear-drops flowing,
Tell me that we shall part on earth no more;
And I can trust thee to thy Saviour, knowing
He will but waft thee to a happier shore!

* * * * *

She ceased,—and slowly, gently, stole
The hands that veiled his face—
They yielded to her soft control,
And still more soft embrace!
Yes—she had won!—'twere far beyond,
What mortal power could do,
To shrink from love, so deep, so fond,
So tender, and so true!
They parted not!—His failing life
Her deep devotion blessed,
And she—his love, his bride, his wife,—
Strove to forget the rest!

And, for a time, th' insidious foe,
Less bent to crush, appeared;
His step grew firmer, and the glow
Of love his spirit cheered!
But when the nation's voice was heard,
In one, vast, mighty choir,
Then was his fervent spirit stirred
With all its former fire!
He longed to join the wondrous band,
And sing th' inspiring lay
That echoed through our happy land,
On that bright first of May!

They sought the Town—the world's vast fair.
And, 'mid the varied race
Of nations, that devoted pair
Soon found a resting-place.
But not for them, the joyous glow
Of happiness, they sought to know—
Each day he weaker grew,—each day
Brought some fresh symptom of decay,

Till e'en her sanguine soul grew chill
With dread of the approaching ill!
At length, the threatened storm-cloud burst,
The self-same day I saw them first.
That very morn he bade farewell
To one who loved him passing well,
And to that old familiar friend,
Spoke calmly of the coming end;
Then signed the simple, short bequest,
That left the pittance he possessed,
To her,—the fond and faithful wife,
Whose love had made him cling to life.
This done, he sought her as she stood
Beside the fountain's feathery flood,
Where first I marked her; and they passed
An hour of tranquil joy,—the last—
In wandering o'er that mighty Fane,
He never might behold again.

Whether the parting of that morn,
Or toil his feeble frame had borne,

Struck the last blow—ah! who can say?
Suffice it, that that frame gave way!
The life-blood burst its feeble bound,
And poured th' ensanguined tide around!
And, though still faintly came his breath,
Yet seemed it like the sleep of Death!

But not like this might pass his life!
Yet,—yet some days of pain and strife
Were his to bear, and hers deplore,
Ere he might suffer pain no more.
But now the end approached,—he lay
Expiring, at the close of day—
All struggle long had seemed to cease,
And bright his face with hope and peace!
Like a tired trav'ller at the close
Of toilsome day, who seeks repose,
He laid him down, and longed to rest
For ever, on his Saviour's breast!

The room was still, but for the sound
Of distant, murmuring life around!
The evening air a freshness brought,
That e'en his failing senses caught;
And like a lamp, whose dying ray
Seems brightest ere it sinks away,
So did his spirit, on the verge
Of this dark earth, from clouds emerge,
And shine, with all the radiance given
Forth from the opening gates of Heaven!

She saw the close was well-nigh come—
His spirit soon should seek its home:
And meek she rested by his side,
Striving her own fierce grief to hide,
Lest she should rend his tender heart,
And make it harder yet to part!
And thus, those evening hours were spent,
And oft in solemn prayer she bent,
Until, at last, like music's knell,
He murmured forth his last farewell!

1.

Beloved! I leave thee! Yes, I go
From these dark scenes—*alone*—
And, ah! too bitterly, I know
Thou'lt weep, when I am gone!
For angel-like, thy love has come
To gild my path with light,
And yet thou may'st not seek the home
Where now I wing my flight!

2.

Alone I go!—and, but for thee,
My spirit should not shrink!
E'en now, it thrills triumphantly,
As on the shadowy brink
Of Death's dark stream, I stand alone,
And seem to catch the hymn
(Resounding ever round the throne,)
Of glorious Cherubim!

3.

But thou!—I leave thee on the shore,
To watch,—to pray,—to weep!
My heart shall soothe thy griefs no more
Nor pillow soft thy sleep—
No more we'll talk in bower, or grove,
Of those diviner themes,
That joined us in a higher love,
A heaven of radiant dreams!

4.

But faint thou not! A few short years
Of mingled joy and woe,
And thou shalt cease from earthly fears,
And follow, where I go!
Yes, thou shalt follow!—gaze not back,
Upon the pathway trod,
But onward!—on the shining track
That leads thee up to God!

5.

Ay!—I can feel thy mute caress,
That still would hold me fast—
I know thy deathless tenderness
Is with me to the last!
Still can I clasp thy hand's soft glow,
Tho' faint my failing breath,—
But when that clasp is loosed—thou'lt know . . .
'Tis no more I,—but—Death! . . .

He ceased,—and sighed,—then feebly pressed
The hand he held unto his breast,
And so remained,—until, at length,
That parting pressure lost its strength,
And still relaxed—yet more—and more,
Till, at the last, all power was o'er,—
And then she felt his grasp was gone,—
And knew—*that she was all alone!*

* * * * *

Part VI.

The ties that exist between a great Author and those of his Readers who appreciate his works—The perusal of such Tales as those of * * * well suited to the Exhibition.—The blind Lady and her child.

PART VI.

Ah, stern old Time! that on thy chequered way
Nor joy, nor grief, nor beauty, wins to stay!
Thou hast not paused to spare this brilliant Fane,
Whose matchless marvels ne'er shall live again,
Save in the vain remembrance of the throng,
Or, vainer yet, in this my simple song!

Yet do I dwell with ever-new regret
On scenes and joys I fondly cherish yet;
Recall each hour that swiftly glided by,
And to its mem'ry heave one tender sigh.

Oft in those crystal halls, in quiet nook,
I lonely rested, with some treasured book

By one of world-wide fame;—and dwelt once more
On many a passage noted oft before;
Whilst some ennobling theme, or graceful thought,
Though not unknown, the old enchantment wrought,
That from my earliest youth my soul inspired,
When that great master's works my fancy fired.
Strange—strange the charm of that mysterious tie—
That solemn, sweet, yet voiceless sympathy,
That binds the author to the favoured few
Who read his soul with faith unchanged and true!
Who learn of him—and in his towering flight
Above this world of dim and cheerless night,
Rise, by his genius borne, to realms of purer light!

Ah, mystic bond! enduring not the less,
Because within the heart its tenderness
Lies to its object hidden—nor less sweet,
E'en though in this cold world they ne'er should meet,
The author and the student—for they bear
A flowery chain that binds their souls more near

Than oft the ties of kindred—in those themes
Dear to them both—the Poet's fairy dreams,
The priceless hoards of old scholastic lore,
And all creative Fancy's varied store!

So in the days of my enchanted youth,
Charmed by that genius' power—its force and truth,
My glowing heart responded to each word,
And admiration all my being stirred!
And oft I paused, and eager longed to look
Beyond the page of each entrancing book,
To read its author, and in him behold
All that his soul had taught—his pen had told!
And now, when years have passed, and youth is o'er,
Still beats my heart responsive as of yore:
Still wakes a thrill, perchance more deep, more fond,
At many a tale long loved and often conned,
Till every year but swells the debt I owe,
The treasured debt my heart would not forego,
To one who ne'er that grateful heart can know.

Well with that scene did those bright fictions blend,
And to its charm a higher beauty lend!
Once, as I read them, near me passed a pair—
A lady, drawn along in easy chair,
And her young daughter! such a graceful thing
As led one back to youth's own joyous spring,
But to behold her!—light her step as air,
And blue her eyes, and bright her golden hair!
She looked like one who could not but be gay;
And life to her seemed one long summer's day.
Flitting from side to side with sportive grace,
She went—and revelled in that fairy place,
But to her mother back she still would come
Gladly, like truant bird that seeks its home;
And oft recounted, with a childish glee,
All she had seen—and longed for her to see!
Then, as I gazed upon that mother's eyes,
I marked, with somewhat of a sad surprise,
That she was *blind*;—and though a passing gleam
Of pleasure, like the sun on stagnant stream,
Lit them, whene'er she heard that ringing tone,
They had no life—no lustre of their own.

Sad was her face, and yet its look was mild,
And oft in accents low, she spoke and smiled;
And many a question asked, as though to draw
From that young mind its thoughts on what it saw.
But, when the child was absent, I could mark
The fixed, sad look of one whose eyes were dark,
Whose world was all within her, and above,
And whom the joys of earth had ceased to move.

Near me awhile they stood, and soon the child
Gazed on my face with frank, sweet look, and smiled—
Then nearer drew, and many a question asked,
Till my poor wits were somewhat rudely tasked,
Such fair and fitting answers to return,
As should teach all that she desired to learn.
At length, her mother bade the man who drew
Her carriage light, depart awhile, and view
Free as he listed, all the Crystal Fane,
Whilst in that spot an hour she should remain.
Then, perched on low camp-stool, the little maid
Sat, and the mother's hand was softly laid

Upon her golden hair, and tenderly
Caressed those locks she never more might see!
And so the child sat mute, and gazed around,
Listening enraptured to the distant sound,
Of music, that with oft-repeated swell,
Came on our ears in tones remembered well.
But, when it ceased, her mother's arm she placed
Round the soft circle of her tiny waist,
And nestling nearer, with caressing air
Stroked the wan face, the soft and braided hair,
And kissed those darkened orbs, until they shone
With love and pleasure, though their sight was gone.
Then, with a sound that made my heart rejoice,
She raised at length her clear melodious voice,
And, from the fulness of her happy soul,
Poured forth her guileless thoughts without control.

1.

Mother! sweet mother! the birds are winging
Glad through this palace fair,
And flowers around, their breath are flinging
Fresh on the pleasant air!
Would *thou* couldst mark those founts soft gleaming.
Bright in the sun—like me!
Long, long ago, my heart's blest dreaming,
Was, that thine eyes should see!

2.

Mother! the crowd like a stream is flowing
Down the long aisles, afar!
But I am here, dread not my going
There, where those myriads are!
Here will we make our gipsy dwelling
On this bright Indian strand!
Now will I list to a tale of thy telling,
One, of this glittering land!

3.

Mother! . . . alas! the tears are stealing
Down o'er thy cherished face!
What can have caused such pensive feeling—
Tears—in so sweet a place?
Ah! I was wrong to wander and leave thee,
Shame on my thoughtless mind!
Never again shall thine Alice grieve thee:
Would that thou wert not blind!

4.

Tell me! ah, say! That fearful blindness!
Why is it thus thy share?
True, thou hast said it was sent in kindness,
Yet is it hard to bear!
Why was it given to thee, my mother?
Oft have I longed to know!
Thou art *so* good! sure many another
Merits it more than thou!

Then, as she ceased, her large blue eyes she raised
Upon that darkened face, and earnest gazed;
And wiped the tears upon her wasted cheek,
And kissed each place, and paused to hear her speak,
Till in soft tone the mother's voice arose,
Increasing still, and strengthening to the close,
As with a nameless thrill, her spirit woke
From its calm rest, and thus her feelings spoke—

1.

Child! I may weep, but yet not all in sadness,
Many a brighter cause shall call forth tears!
Art *thou* not with me?—lo! I weep for gladness,
O'er *thy* young love, that charms my closing years!

2.

True, I am blind! no more may I behold thee!
Darkness between us two must ever come;
But I can hear thy voice—still, still can fold thee
Close to my throbbing heart, thine own true home!

3.

And I can *pray!* Ah, solemn, priceless blessing!
Life has been long with me one fervent prayer!
More, more than all of this vain world's possessing,
Dearer than *sight*, the peace I gather *there!*

4.

And thou, my child! one day this world shall teach thee,
All the sad lore its dark experience lends,
But it is well! when pain, when sorrow reach thee,
Turn not from them thy face, for they are *friends!*

5.

Friends—for they soften, though they rend, the spirit—
Friends—for with holier sight they gift the blind—
Friends—for they teach how vain all earthly merit—
Friends—for *the Cross* is where they point mankind!

6.

Grieve not for me, then, though my lot be sorrow
Here, on this earth—one dark, perpetual night!
Think of the joy, the rapture of that morrow,
When we shall meet in Heaven's eternal light!

Beauteous her face as thus she spoke, and raised
Those sightless orbs, almost as though she gazed
Upon the heaven, to which her happy soul
Longed to attain, as to its final goal!
And then the child still nearer, nearer drew,
And round her neck her fond arms softly threw,
And there remained, as though her place of rest.
Was, and must still be, on that mother's breast!

And thus I left them, with a fond regret;
Never perchance to meet again, and yet
Never that mother, nor her child forget!

* * * * *

And now, 'tis past! the wondrous year is gone;
And to our last, we swift are hurrying on!
Like some bright page, with rare devices fraught,
And rich in many a high ennobling thought,
Illumined round with those resplendent dyes
That dazzle, whilst they charm, admiring eyes—
Ten thousand brilliant hues, that never yet
Within such space, in shades so varied met—
Such was this shining year! and now 'tis o'er—
The page is turned, forgotten half its lore,
And to dull plodding prose, we turn once more!
But not forgotten shall the lesson rest
That on mankind the Crystal Fane impressed!
Long shall the nation's heart record the day
When on our shores they met, one First of May!
And dreams of rivalry in art and skill,
Shall join with memories of frank good will,
Till the past year, in each succeeding age,
To peaceful arts, and friendship shall engage,
And shine, through after times, one bright unspotted page!

THE END.

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